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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 008696

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOT MOVES ON TRAFFICKING-IN-PERSONS INITIATIVES

(U) Classified by DCM Robert S. Deutsch; reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. MFA Deputy DirGen for Consular Affairs Topcuoglu told us 11/26 the GOT has established an inter-agency task force to address trafficking-in-persons (TIP) in Turkey. The group's first priority is to establish and adopt the GOT's National Action Plan on TIP. The plan, currently in its final drafting stage, takes a three-pronged approach: finalize the legal framework for combating TIP and its organizers, provide better assistance to victims in Turkey, and implement training and awareness programs. However, Topcuoglu warned current GOT internal procedures continue to slow implementation of many programs. End summary.

GOT Task Force and National TIP Action Plan

2. (U) Nov 26 MFA Deputy DirGen for Consular Affairs Topcuoglu reviewed with us GOT progress on tackling TIP. Composed of approximately 25 members, the GOT TIP task force has met twice thus far and continues to meet every 15 days. The group is chaired by the MFA Directorate General for Consular Affairs and contains members from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Health, Directorate of Status and Problems of Women, and Child Protection Institution. Smaller coordinating bodies are found within the Ministry of Interior in order to streamline MOI's response to TIP. After determining the scope of each agency's TIP authority, the task force drafted an eleven-point National Action Plan which will become the framework for the GOT's fight against TIP.

3. (C) Pending finalization by the relevant ministries, the National Action Plan seeks to first strengthen and finalize the legal framework for TIP by amending its Labour Law and Working Permission for Foreigners and its citizenship law. Whether Turkey's current eyewitness protection law for certain crimes is applicable to cases of human trafficking needs to be clarified. Second, the National Action Plan concentrates upon victim assistance. Governors from the eastern city of Iğdır to the western city of Istanbul have been tasked to identify existing buildings that could be used for victim shelters. Following the establishment of victim shelters, a victim hotline would be established in 16 cities determined to be high TIP destinations. GOT has further contacted NGOs to determine their potential role of assistance to victims. Lastly, GOT seeks to implement comprehensive training and awareness programs aimed at the judiciary and law enforcement agencies in order to emphasize responsiveness to both victim assistance and prosecution of TIP organizers.

4. (C) Topcuoglu cautioned the change in government has led to delays in the ratification time of the Palermo Convention on Trafficking which is required for the Turkish Ministry of Finance to allocate funding for any potential GOT initiatives. She further added that statistics based upon the trafficking law passed in August 2002 would not be available until June 2003 at the earliest. The Turkish Ministry of Justice requires the courts to submit statistical information (i.e., number of cases filed, how these were reconciled) only twice a year. We stressed the importance of concrete actions and suggested NGOs may be able to help with certain aspects of the National Action Plan. Topcuoglu stated the Task Force was exploring all possibilities.

Comment

5. (C) Embassy comment: The creation of an inter-agency task force is a strong step by the GOT to combat TIP. The ministerial-level personnel changes caused by the November 3 GOT elections have caused the ratification of the Palermo Convention and other legal changes to be delayed. However,

working-level non-constitutional reforms, such as victim identification and NGO coordination could be implemented fairly quickly without bueracratic interference. End comment.
DEUTSCH